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Chapter I

DEATH AT GANKWE

WE HAD not thought to come upon death on our first night in the Suriname bush. What had killed Sedefo's brother no one could as yet say, for the time had not come to call upon the spirit of the dead man to speak. Death, said the Bush Negroes, was ravaging the family. Kunu, the law of retribution, the tool of ancestors and gods, had found this latest victim an easy prey to the black magic which had been invoked against him. In whispers they talked about a quarrel at work with a man who had a powerful snake god.

"The man's family kunu and the enemy's Aboma god," we heard as a refrain to the low muttering.

There would be dancing all that night for the spirit of the dead, the natives told us, and they asked if we did not wish to come and honor the dead. But an old man objected. "Let them wait until tomorrow," he said, "let them wait until they are rested. To face the spirit of the dead their own spirits must be strong."

That night whenever we stirred in our sleep we strained for the sound of the drums, but the wind blew from the east, and though Gankwe, where the dead man lay in state, was but a ten-minute run down the rapids, we could hear nothing. In the morning, however, we heard them plainly, heard the invocations drummed by the grave diggers on their way to the burial ground deep in the bush on the opposite bank.

Osio tintin
Osio be's dyo.

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REBEL DESTINY

764 [539] "On the sacred apinti drum we speak to the spirit; we tell it we go to dig the grave." So the drum spoke. From the shore we could see five figures in the small corial, and, as they came closer, we saw also the drum, the food the men carried, and the muddy hoe. They would do this the next day and the next, for to dig a grave takes a long time.

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795 769 191 Although separated by many generations from their African places of origin, the Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana have held to the traditions and beliefs of their aboriginal home. In the Surinaame bush, as in Africa, the responsibility which an individual bears toward his social group does not end with death. His clan, his village, and his family look to him, when he has joined the spirits of his ancestors, to protect them against the magic of their enemies, to help them in time of drought or pestilence, and at all times to intercede for them with the gods.

As in Africa, the spirit of the dead is powerful for good or evil, and the rites of death must be carried out as tradition demands, so that the dead man may feel he has received honor among the living and proper introduction to the world of the dead. As in Africa, we found that the first care for the dead is to place the body on the central portion of a broken canoe; that rum and tobacco are included in the water with which the body is washed; that in washing the dead, the back must not be touched; that the number of those who wash the body must not be an even one—five is the number preferred, though three persons are used, and seven; that those chosen must not be young, for it takes age and the knowledge of controlling the spirits which age brings to approach the dead without suffering harm.

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764 While the body lies in the open house of the dead, relatives and the village elders are in attendance on the spirit night and day. It is they who all night tell stories about the trickster, spider Anansi, to amuse the spirit, and they who play traditional games. The dances begin when

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the body has been put into the hexagonal cedar box which is ornamented with the cross-like design called by the natives *kese-oyo*, the eye of the coffin.

"How many days to make the coffin?" we asked our informant.

"One day only, but they do not start the first day. They must go into the bush and hunt out a cedar tree and cut it down, and then there must be prayers."

It became clear as we talked with this man, who so reluctantly spoke of these rites, that death cannot be hurried.

"It takes time," he said, "hammocks and cloths must be gathered, and other articles to put into the coffin. It takes time."

Before the body is put into the coffin, the ears and nostrils are packed with tobacco and cotton, and the head and face are swathed in white so that the dead man may be recognized when he walks abroad.

As we sat and talked of death, we heard the discharge of guns and were told that the coffin was being closed and that these shots were to honor the spirit. "They dance well at Gankwe," said our friend, casting an eye in the direction of the village and showing very plainly his eagerness to be off. But we detained him and brought the conversation back to the digging of the grave.

To dig a grave takes a long time, we heard again. The digging party first goes out to select a fitting place in the "big bush" where the dead lie. Though it is not considered imperative—some villages do not follow the practice at all—it is considered good form to consult the spirit of the dead man whether or not he approves of the spot chosen. Then all has to be done softly—*safvi*—without haste. The men who go to dig the grave must be in the prime of life, for they must not tire easily, and even these strong young men must work slowly, that no drop of perspiration fall into the upturned earth. If one drop of perspiration were to fall into the grave, then the dead man would in time claim the companionship of the living spirit

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764 995 [171] of him from whom it had dropped. The same belief in the identification of the essence of one's being with any part of one's body which actuates so many primitive peoples, and is so characteristic of West Africa, exists among the Bush Negroes. It is for this reason that when an African or a Bush Negro dies away from home some of his hair and nail parings are sent to his native village for ceremonial burial. And it is for this reason, too, that for three mornings we saw the party of five young men go out from Gankwe to dig the grave of Sedefo's brother and heard the drum's invocation,

[537] *Orio ntatin*
Orio he'e dyo.

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996 996 The night was still and dark. The natives said the moon was dead and this was the time for the dances to the river gods, but since there was a death in Gankwe all the gods might be danced to, for in times of important rituals, like death or the breaking of mourning or harvest festivals, it was not necessary to wait for the day sacred to each god to dance.

"They dance well at Gankwe," said our informant, as he sat by, and then after listening for a few moments he added, "They're dancing already."

We, too, walked out on the path to listen, and gradually we separated the sound of the falls above our camp from what seemed like the pulse of the night itself.

"It doesn't boom, does it?" we asked each other, remembering the accounts of impressionable travelers.

Soon Sedefo himself appeared and another, and we started for Gankwe.

"*W'aka kwa*, Sedefo," called our host at camp as we put off. He was evidently uneasy about us and asked the paddlers to be careful, for it is not safe on the river at night with the rapids below and the spirits that hover about.

The paddles cut the water so soundlessly that it did seem as if the spirits were carrying the boat downstream.

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Ahead of us and all about were the various shades of darkness which go to make the jungle darkness on a moonless night—the dark water, the dark branch of a liana which our paddlers skirted as if by magic, the dark wall of forest, and the dark horizon. But soon there was foam on the water, and then all the darkness seemed to break and come to life. We heard the drums plainly, and the rattles, the singing voices, and the chorus of approbation from the young onlookers, breaking into the song. We were nearing the rapids and Gankwe.

Up the bank, through the spiritual guard of palm fronds which stretched across the path, and up the path we went to the great village clearing, where the principal houses are grouped and where stands the house for the dead.

In this open palm-thatched house the coffin, covered over with a white striped cloth, rested on a rough bier. Underneath the head of the coffin a calabash dish stood to receive the fluid of the putrifying body, while in front of the coffin a fire smoldered and to one side a hammock was slung where Sedefo, or in his absence an elder of the village, lay to guard the dead. The drummers and some elders sat in front of the house facing the phalanx of singers seated on their low stools some ten feet away from them. There were perhaps fifty women singing, and as many standing about to the left ready to begin dancing again, or just standing by to mark the rhythm with hand clapping and a slight swaying in place. Here and there, hung upon forked sticks which had been planted in the ground or placed on the ground beside a stool, were a few lanterns. They cast a pale shadowy light and brought into relief the ceremonially oil-anointed shoulder of one, the shining anklets of another, a brilliant red strip of cloth, the intricate pattern of another's hairdress.

With our coming the singing and dancing had stopped. The children grouped together moved toward us in a body, and then took to their heels, repeating this again and again, until the two or three we had already talked with at our camp took courage and squatted down at our feet. The older

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609 people kept their distance, and among them some pithy proverbs were spoken to bear upon the shortcomings of the white man. One or two of them turned to repeat to the dead what had been said, and there was great laughter. Sedefo [775] came to assure us that the dead man liked it very much. For the dead, it appeared, were especially susceptible to humor and to exceptional occasions.

964 About us, or edging their way toward us, were the 298 younger men in their ceremonial dress, the toga-like cloth covering their bodies, but leaving one shoulder bared for respect, and the women in their knee-length *pangi*, or [301] cloths, hanging from the waist, and their shining brass rings reaching from wrist to elbow and from ankle halfway up to the knee. Among the dancers, but standing somewhat [534] aloof, could be seen a man or woman with seed rattles about the ankles. These were the fine dancers. Of them our informant had spoken when he said, "They dance well at Gankwe."

964 Carved stools were placed for us facing the coffin a little [350] to the left of the singers, where we could best see the dancing. 533 One or two lanterns were moved to give us better light. The drummers, who had not left their places, took up the rhythm again—one of the women had us know that the spirit of the dead man had communicated to the spirits of the drummers that he wanted to see the dancing resumed. The singing began—a woman's falsetto voice and a chorus; the hand clapping of the singers and bystanders emphasized the basic rhythm. It was slow at first, then quickened, and the dancing became more animated.

"They dance seketi," whispered our friends. "Later they will dance awasa."

964 The dancing was confined to a comparatively small space. 535 It began with a barely perceptible motion of the feet of the dancers to the rhythm of the drums and the hand clapping. Then the feet began to execute figures in place, without leaving the ground, the arms hanging loosely at the side. This was continued for some time, until, arms flexed and held rigid at the elbow, and knees bent but rigid, too, the

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intricate steps began. The movement of the feet, angular and precise, was reiterated by the outstretched palms, while all the muscles of the hips took up the rhythm. Now one of the men with the seed rattles at his feet danced facing a woman who also had these rattles, and the dance became theirs with a chorus of dancers moving more and more to the side, keeping the rhythm with the feet. The drums beat faster, the hand clapping became louder. Those two balanced their bodies as they bent their knees lower and lower, all the while executing the figures with feet, arms, and hips, and how unaware they seemed of the audience! And even of each other, for what awareness there was to quicken the pulse of the dancing was more than one man's awareness of one woman. It might have been a dance to Asaase—the great Earth Mother—but it was, in fact, dancing for the dead, for the two would turn again and again to face the coffin, as the others had done, except during the intervals when they recalled the white man and woman in back, and turned to dance to us and our flashlights.

Seketi, awasa. . . . The dances changed, and the songs, and the drum rhythms changed, too. The children at our feet had fallen asleep and lay doubled over, their heads resting upon their toes. More men joined the dancers. It was long past midnight. The women who had infants on their backs moved away silently in the direction of their huts, but when an elderly woman tried to go, too, she was reprimanded and sat down again.

There was another leader for the singing, and another. A man's falsetto was heard in a long recitative that preceded the dancing to the massed voices of the chorus. He faced now the dead, now us, as he improvised. Once more it was gay.

The dancing became more and more spirited, but when a dancer had continued in the circle for some time, an older woman coming forward from among the bystanders would put her arm about her and exclaim the singsong, "*Adoo! . . . Adoo! . . . Adoo!*" Others came forward to con-

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gratulate the dancer, while another had taken her place in the dance, only to be brought to herself again when her dancing had become so abandoned that there was danger of falling or tripping. For it is always a bad thing for one's *akra*—soul—to fall from exhaustion or even to trip while dancing, and it would have been especially dangerous to have fallen with the spirit of the dead so close.

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As time passed, figures were seen edging away into the darkness. The knot of dancers thinned. Now there were but two young women dancing. They wore identical cloths of a new material, a pattern resembling the cloth over the coffin. They were related to the dead man. When all were wearied, they had to go on dancing. . . . Dawn would not be long in coming.

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We knew that it would not be long before the spirit of the dead would be called upon to tell his family, fellow villagers, and clansmen how death had come upon him. For, in the Guiana bush, except for the very old, there is little natural dying. The deceased has been killed either by the gods whom he has offended or by the black magic of a powerful enemy, and it is of this which he must tell before his burial. When Sedefo came to our camp the next afternoon, we asked him about the "carrying of the corpse," as the ceremony is called. We told him that his people in Africa—for the Bush Negroes know that their origins are African—also asked the spirit of the dead why death had come upon him, and we plied him with questions. What would they do to be sure the answer was right? Who would ask the questions? When would they establish the facts of the killing? And might we come and see?

There would be no trouble, he told us amiably enough. The spirits of the dead liked attention, and for the *Bakra*—the white man—to come so often to his brother's bier was a compliment. We could return with him, but we must make haste—and it was evident that important ceremonies were about to take place.

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And so once more we were in Sedefo's canoe running the rapids, and once more we pulled up at the landing place. 764

It was quiet enough there, and no one passing would have noticed anything out of the ordinary in the behavior of the one or two women washing clothes at the riverside, or of the children playing about in the water. Again we climbed the path to the village, this time to the delighted shrieks of the children, whose cries brought others, until we were surrounded by a fearless, clamoring group, shouting, calling after us, "Bak'a, Ame'ica' Bak'a!" Sedefo took us to his house, where we met the senior of his two wives, and turned us over to a young man, who had played one of the drums in the ceremony of the evening before, to show us the village. This was the routine of courtesy due any visitor. Nothing more tangible than a slight reserve marked the tension which made this village different from what it would have been on any midafternoon.

In front of the house of mourning all was quiet. Three elderly men sat on their low stools, talking in low tones. They greeted us as we passed but neither engaged us in conversation nor offered us a seat. Inside the house the small fire still smoldered, and, where the hammock had been, now crouched, soundlessly, an old woman who, we later learned, was the dead man's maternal aunt. We were struck with the number of houses that had symbols of spiritual protection over their doors—*obias*, they are called—magically treated to keep the spirits of death from harming the occupants. As we passed one doorway, a woman holding a baby hastily threw a covering over its head, but not before we saw that it had special markings of sacred white clay on its face. The child was under treatment for some illness, and the mother, in these days when spiritual danger stalked about, could take no chances of the Bakra's magic obstructing the cure.

On the other side of the village, farthest away from the house of death, life flowed on yet more evenly. But as we looked about, our guide stiffened, and soon we too caught the sound of the drums which rapidly became louder. He

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hurried us toward the river and had quite got away from us as we came to the principal shrine of the village at the head of the path. As we started down the hill to the river an elder of Gankwe stopped us with an imperative, "You must not go."

Very loud and very fast the drums now sounded—it was the rhythm to Kediampo, the Sky God—and a moment later the grave diggers appeared. They came not by the usual way and not under the spiritual guard, but along an overgrown side path. There were ten or twelve men, five of them muddied from their labors, carrying drums and cutlasses, the others, villagers who had awaited them. The men who had been digging wore green parrot's feathers in their hair, and they walked briskly and silently in single file to the house of mourning. There was a great stillness along the path of the diggers. The children had disappeared and the women sought shelter in their own doorways. Stools were not offered us—there was serious business at hand.

All the men in the village had gathered here; they stood in a semicircle about the front of the open shelter. The old woman slowly arose and, taking a small strip of white cloth, passed it once along each side of the coffin and once over the back as though she were ceremonially cleansing it. Four of the earth-stained young men now took up the coffin, lifting it from the bier and placing it on the ground in front of the house, raising and lowering it three times before it was finally set down. A fifth brought out two pads of green leaves, and two of the bearers put these on their heads. The questioning was about to begin.

As they raised the coffin with the putrifying body within it on their heads, their muscles stiffened. With eyes half glazed, and expressionless faces, they seemed there but to do the bidding of the spirit of the dead man whose body they supported. They swayed forward and back, from side to side, without moving their feet, and the coffin swayed with their swaying. And then they began to advance, slowly at first, but after a few steps briskly, to a

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group of three elders who stood to the left of the death house. Three times they advanced, and three times retreated, and each time as they reached the three men, one of the elders would put up his hand, touch the end of the wooden box, and the bearers would retreat.

Sedefo took his place with the three and asked a question. The coffin advanced, retreated. Sedefo spoke again; what he said we could not hear, for his voice was so low that it reached us as a murmur. The response to the second question was disquieting; the men retreated without moving toward the questioner, step by step they moved slowly backward in a circle before us, and then, without any hesitation, they started on a run into the village along the path to our left. Two of the grave diggers followed them, for when the dead speaks, his replies to the questions asked him must be interpreted and attested.

Serious consequences may follow the expression of fact exposed by the dead. Repeated visits to a given house will point the finger of suspicion to the one who lives there, and a heavy fine at best, or expulsion from the village to certain death in the unprotecting bush at the worst, may be his fate. Supernatural forces are beyond control; here some man's destiny was being sealed by the automatic movements of two others under the hypnotizing influence of the spirit of the dead. Back came the coffin and the questioning was resumed. This time the man who took up the inquiry stood upwind, and we could hear his low voice.

"Did a white man slay you?" he asked. We watched anxiously. What if the answer should be that our coming to the bush had brought death in its train? But the bearers retreated when they came where the questioner was standing.

"Did someone at Ganzee slay you?" Again the advance, and the backward steps to the mourning place.

"Did someone at Gandya village slay you?" The answer was "No."

"Did someone at Gankwe slay you?" And with the question, the corpse and its bearers once more disappeared from sight into the village, the women fleeing before it and

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herding the children before them so that they would be upwind from the coffin and the stench of decaying flesh.

As they returned the rear bearer was relieved; the tension eased for a moment, but there was one man who did not smile. And it was whispered that he lived in the part of the village where the corpse invariably went. The scene changed slightly; Sedefo, who had stopped questioning, resumed his efforts, and five, ten, fifteen times the bearers advanced toward him and retreated from where he stood. Sometimes we caught our breath; the corpse was coming toward us; but always the bearers swerved before they reached us, going no farther than the grove of thorn palms that grew near the house of death. Then once more they broke through the ranks of questioners and, followed by the watchers, were off in the direction of the village council house and the dwelling of the chief.

The bearer who had been relieved came forward; the corpse, he said, wanted to speak; he must be allowed to carry the body again. This time there was little relief while the change was being made, for the man was possessed, and the air vibrated with the intensity of the spirit which animated him. But apparently there were still difficulties. Again and again the questions were asked, again and again the bearers advanced, retreated. Sedefo kept insisting "Yu *mu* taki. You *must* speak!" and again the coffin advanced, retreated, and then once more went to our left into the village.

Clouds were rising to windward; the sun was low on the horizon. The bearers returned, advanced to the village head once, twice, again, and again, and then the coffin was placed on the ground, raised three times, and left there for a moment before others took it into the house and replaced it where it had been when we first saw it. The ceremony was over; the elders of the village went to hold council and to interpret what the dead man had said.

In the swift tropical dusk, Sedefo and his son came to take us back to our camp. The drummers were adjusting the drums for the night's dancing. "He spoke, ai," he told

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as when we asked him. But what the pronouncement had been we were not to learn.

"It takes a strong spirit to stand before the spirit of the dead," said our host when we returned to camp. "I don't wonder that you are tired."

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The burial took place on the seventh day of death, our sixth in the Surinaame bush. Sedefo, who had promised to come for us so that we could see the ceremonies, had not appeared for two days, and we were certain that he would fail us. But on that day he appeared, just as we had eaten our noon meal. "We do not hurry the spirit," he explained, "but the burial must be over before the sun has gone. Make haste!" And again we went to Gankwe.

The dancing we had seen on the night of our first visit had been spirited, even gay. The carrying of the corpse had been terrifying in the spell of magic it had cast and in its grim potentialities. Today what we saw was saddening. For today the dead man was to say goodbye to his friends, his family, and his village.

All the preparations had been made, and as we came in sight of the house of mourning the ceremonies were beginning. The men were about as before, but there were women, too, and even a few of the older boys. Stools were offered us, and as we sat down the coffin was brought out of the hut into the open space in front of it. Once more four of the young men who had dug the grave took it off its bier; they raised and lowered it three times before it was finally set down upon the earth. And the same two bearers who had carried the coffin on their heads when the spirit of the dead had spoken were now to carry it once more. This time, however, the forward bearer placed a broad bit of palm leaf on his head before he took up the coffin. For after seven days in the tropical heat, protection against the drippings of the corpse could not be dispensed with.

Everything that had been used in the ritual of death was to be taken away with the body. The calabash con-

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764 taining the drippings was taken away by two young men to be emptied, a third going ahead to warn of what was coming. The floor of the mourning house was swept by two others, and the sweepings carefully collected and placed, with the calabash, in the bungolo, the broken boat on which the corpse had lain until the coffin was made. The fire was extinguished; the open hut was to be left as it had been before death had come.

This time the corpse was carried to allow the spirit to say goodbye. Out and back, out and back it went. First to the village *kruta wara*—the council house—where the dead man in life as a boy had sat and listened to his elders debate the affairs of the village, and where he as a full-fledged member of the community had "gone aside" with a group of his fellows to talk over more privately some proposal placed before the men by the council of old men and the village head. Then his body was carried to the portion of Gankwe nearest the river and back, and finally to the house where lived the mother of his dead wife, and where his little boy had been living since his mother's death. And now, for the first time, we heard wailing. "He is going from me. My children are gone," was the lamentation, as the coffin stopped, backed away, returned once more and yet once again to say a final farewell.

The eyes of many of the people who were standing about so quietly were moist. Another member of the village had gone, and kunu had again taken its toll.

Now the body rested upon the ground before the mourning house. To the rear of the coffin were the three drums and the drummers, ready to play. The rhythms began fast and loud, with the big agida drum carrying the basic beat and the apinti talking to the spirit of the dead. More people gathered; women ventured near in greater numbers, and Sedefo appeared with his shotgun to render the final salutes to the spirit. As the reverberations ended, Sedefo took up a bowl of powdered sacred white clay, and walking with measured step in time to the drums, sprinkled the ground so that a circle of white now enclosed the space about the coffin. A girl began to dance Vodu—she was

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dancing to the snake god by whom she was possessed. More people came, and these brought gifts of peanuts, cassava, sugar cane, rice. The food was thrown over the coffin and within the white circular path, on which a man was now dancing round and round in time to the drums. Faster and faster he twirled his way about the coffin, and now another joined him while a third walked slowly about the wooden box, a bunch of plantains in his hand, which he slashed from the stem with his machete so that they, too, fell over the coffin.

The men were dancing to the great Kromanti spirits; the tiger—jaguar—and the buzzard, two of the three forms which the dreaded Kromanti obia can take. "Obia! Huh! Huh!" one ejaculated, imitating the tiger, as his dancing became wilder and wilder. As he ran about the village he wrested a branch from a tree and blindly slashed about him with it. He ran through the clump of thorn palms to our left and emerged with another branch, and now those about were on their guard, for to be struck with those thorns would cause serious lacerations. But the dancer's spirit, his Kromanti obia protected him against such consequences, for are not the Kromanti men immune to anything that wounds; are they not secure from danger of the iron bullets of a gun or the thrust of a machete? The girl with Vodu ran away as he came near her.

Soon, however, the drums were silent, and another shot was fired—the second salute to the dead. One of the elders of the village, bearing a bundle of several long green branches, took his place on one side of the coffin, a younger man on the other. We could not hear what he said, but as he finished speaking he struck the other three times over the bare back; the first two strokes lightly, but at the third he slashed as hard as he was able. It introduced the one note of merriment that afternoon. The people standing about laughed aloud as the ceremony was repeated. A woman, and then another man, were switched.

As this ended, Sedefo took the place of the elder, and in his hand was another kind of branch. This, too, was long, but except for a tuft at its very end it had been stripped of

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all its leaves, while the butt of the stick was whitened with sacred clay.

Now the ceremony was drawing to a close, and the leave takings were to be said. Sedefo thrust the branch over the coffin, where it was grasped at its whitened end by the dancer who a few moments ago had been so frenzied. The laughter of an instant before was stilled; there was no wailing. Distinctly the low voice of Sedefo came to us as he addressed the corpse:

[539] *"The hour has come when we must part from you. What the Earth has decreed we cannot help. We have done for you what we could. We have given you a funeral worthy of you. You must care for us, and you must deliver us from all evil that may come upon us."*

As he finished, he slashed the branch in two with one quick stroke of his machete, so that the dancer held in his hand only the short whitened stump of what had been the long stem. The dancer then turned and walked sadly toward the river path still holding it in his outstretched hand, nor did he return to the village and the coffin.

Now the place that had been occupied by Sedefo was taken by an elder who held the second of the three sticks with their whitened ends. When Sedefo reappeared, he carried on one arm a little boy, the child of the deceased, and taking the dancer's place across the coffin he grasped the whitened end as the other had done. The separation from the group of men who had Kromanti spirits had taken place; the dead man was next to be separated from his family.

[539] *"You see, we bring your child. Now he is alone. Try to protect him, that he may live in health and prosperity, that he may not fall into the water, that fire may not burn him. Protect him in the bush, that he may not be harmed. Now we must separate you from him. What we must do we cannot help, for it is willed by the law of the Earth."*

With this, the second branch was slashed, and still holding the child Sedefo followed the Kromanti brother

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of the deceased with the same slow sad pace as he took the little boy and the whitened stump to the riverside to await the embarkation of the burial party.

What happened to the third branch we did not see. As the elder's voice faded away, the two bearers helped by their fellows once more took up the coffin and amid the renewed wailing of the women started toward the river. The villagers followed, and we too took the path to the waterside. But after a few steps we were halted by the people ahead of us; some rite was being performed. When we were finally able to proceed, the coffin was being placed in the boat that was to take it across the river to the burial ground. But just outside the spiritual guard, where it had been thrown to the side of the path, we noticed the long green portion of the branch with its freshly cut whitened end. It was here that the dead man had been separated from his village.

No women went to bury the dead. Three canoes, each with its complement of men, started off across the river. In the first boat, resting on the gunwales, the coffin had been placed, and in front and behind it were the bearers to steady it. Underneath was the broken boat with the sweepings of the house of death, the calabash in which the drippings had been, and the short whitened ends of the *sangafu* branches by means of which the spirit had been parted from the living. As the canoe moved off with its load of coffin and paddlers, drums and drummers, two more shots were fired as the final salutes of the village. The third canoe came back twice; once for two broken pieces of iron which had been forgotten, once for the gun. But the canoe was not turned about; the boat was paddled backwards toward the landing place, and someone waded out to hand the desired object to the men in the boat. To turn around would be hazardous; death is dangerous, and they could not tempt danger by giving the spirit hovering about a clue where to return. We stood and watched the little flotilla disappear about the bend, and with us stood the heavy-eyed men and women. Then, when we had all washed away

Herskovits & Herskovits [illegible] (1958–1959) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

[964] [983] There, where we had all washed away the taint of death in the flowing river, we turned and once more climbed the path to the village.

§

The muffled sound of a gunshot came to us as we sat in the hut of the headman, speaking of the funeral. "Another child gone," he said, "Soon he will be safe in the earth."

We had not been permitted to go across the river to witness the burial. "It is a dangerous place for those who do not know it," the headman said. "*Opi*—evil things—are [996] there, bad spirits who harm those who are not prepared, and we do not want evil to come to you. Several years ago there was a Bakra here when we buried another Gaakwe man. He asked to go, and we granted him his wish. But the spirits of the bad bush across the river harmed him and he died, and now his ghost plagues us."

A second shot told us that the bearers had reached the grave after their march through the deep bush where living man seldom came. They had sung the *papa singi*—the dirges—which are intoned as the dead is borne to the grave. Once arrived there and the invocations pronounced, the salute fired, and the gods propitiated, two men would descend into the deep hole there to lift down the coffin and place it in the tunnel-like excavation dug under the undisturbed earth to the side of the large opening; would place it so that the falling earth might not disturb the spirit of the dead.

A third shot.

[413] The body was in the grave. The heaping of earth, with the burial hoe, with feet, and with fingers, back into the hole that had been so laboriously dug had commenced. The sun was getting low and darkness comes early in the big bush.

Now the last shot told us of the final ceremony. The food that had been brought for the last offering was being placed on the mound of heaped-up earth. The strip of white cloth to the spirit was being pushed into the ground on its stick. The burial party was backing away from the grave, slowly, slowly, so that the spirit would not be alarmed, so that it

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

would not guess that the living were eager to desert him. And then all would turn and run as fast as they could to the river's edge, where the unwashed dirt that had accumulated during the digging of the grave, and the more serious spiritual contamination to which they had been exposed in handling the body, would be washed away in the safety of the flowing water. 764

We strained to see the returning party as our canoe was being paddled and poled upstream through the rapids to our camp. But it was too dark, and we heard nothing but the sound of water over rocks.

[illegible] A Hankerlin E-6 (1958-1959) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes 183
Inventaris

688 Marowyne to earn money that he needed for marrying. He was in good health, and he learned about the river "*so te*—until . . . " he knew how to travel on the river safely. But after he had been away only a short time, word came to Kasanya's village that he was ill, and before he could be brought home, he died. They brought back his hair and nail clippings so that his spirit might rest among his own people. They held a big *dede wara*—wake—for him for six days in the village, with the little coffin and the offerings which were to accompany the spirit, and dancing and Anansi stories and the adji game, just as though he had died at home. There were many guns, too. Everything was done, and the spirit of the dead son was asked to help the family against the kunu which was brought to them by the deed of his mother's mother's brother.

[764]

The second son died in the bush. His own gun went off accidentally as he tripped on a hidden liana and killed him, though Kasanya had provided him with all the hunting obias a man would want, and he himself had a strong Kromanti spirit, so that no gun was supposed to have power to hurt him. The third was married when he died. His boat went over in the rapids. His body was never recovered.

[789] [229]

782 "Tomorrow we shall all go and pray to the Mother of the River that she carry us well, that our journey be pleasant, that we reach the Granman's village safely. . . . There across the river is her shrine."

3

761 106 688 It soon became clear that two things dominate the foreground of the spiritual life of the bush—death and kunu. In the last analysis, however, the two are perhaps but one force, for kunu slowly, inexorably, brings death to one member after another of the offender's kin, and it is largely the dead ancestors and the gods who are responsible for the meting out of kunu, in order that the ancient traditions and beliefs may go on. And so it was that daily, and many times daily, incidents not of our special seeking arose to document our knowledge of kunu.

Jr Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

of the white man and blew on it, drawing both his hands lightly over the hands which held the obia. When he had done this, he whispered its tchina.

"Do not let the obia come near a menstruating woman, and do not eat the meat of the crab."

Types of obias varied. Some were of fiber twisted into a cord and woven into bands to fit an arm or a leg, some were worn around the neck, and ended with a few cowries and a bell or a black sack with cowries sewn on them or some bristles and a brilliant bit of a parrot's feather. There were also the plain bands of iron, the Kromanti obias worn by men.

One of the most interesting obias was the coffin obia. It was not to be worn casually, as were all the others we had heretofore acquired. When our cook saw this one he paled.

"Mi Gado," he cried, and then turned to the English at his command to give us a warning which would not be understood by those who stood near. "What you got there? Put that away! You wan' fo' die?" Nor would he come near it until it was well out of sight.

It was, we saw, best hidden, if we wanted to continue our course up the river.

The man who had sold it had himself impressed us with its potency. "This obia is strong. . . . Look, it is made of cedar, the same wood from which we make the big coffins, and it is wrapped in the cloth we use to cover the coffin in which the dead man lies. Now that you have the power which is in the obia, I can tell you that the black on it is the soot from the fire, the white is pemba, and the inside ring is woven from the maripa palm. It will carry you well on the river. Nothing can harm you when you already carry your coffin with you."

The logic of his last remark was not so convincing to the whites as it was to the obia man, but it seemed unwise to question him about it.

"To keep it strong, you must spray it with rum twice a month. When the moon is full you must do it, and again

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

796 787 his rattle danced his dance, the moon sank behind the screen of branches.

It was late. Slowly the last dancer came out of his orgy of possession. One by one the drums stopped until, for a moment, all was quiet. Then, taking the apinti drum up the path beyond our clearing, one of the drummers drummed an invocation to the spirits that had come.

We trained our flashlights on the path which led to the river, lighting the way of the dancers to their waiting boats, while they sang for us the seketi song we had heard the night of Zimbi's funeral.

[533] [534]

Thank you, thank you, white man,
For coming to the Saramacca River,
For bringing us your diamond fire,
To light the darkness of our path.

5

● 764 796 At the village opposite our base camp, a girl had died shortly before our return from up river. The eighth night after the death was to be commemorated with the usual dancing of "eighth-day night," and with the ceremony of throwing away food for the spirit of the dead.

"Come tonight and we will dance for you," the men of the village said. It was agreed that they should come for us when they were through with the ceremony for throwing away the food, for the bereaved family would not look kindly upon the intrusion of the whites at the ceremony.

As we waited for the messenger, Bayo prowled about uneasily. He had been nervous for the past few days. His spirits had been troubling him, and he said he needed to dance. It was some time since he had danced, and his spirits were vexed with him for this neglect.

"If they dance Kromanti, I will dance, too," he said.

We talked with him of the rum we would have to take. The strength in which it was distilled made it necessary to cut it with water. Bayo watched us as we took out one bottle, prepared the rum, and then took up another. His hand interposed.

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1929-1929) 1934
[illegible] Negroes [illegible]
Sanmacca

"Do not take too much rum," he said. "When there is much to drink, obia does not come."

The bottle ready, we waited. Eight, half-past, nine o'clock. When we had decided they were not coming for us, the sharp bark of Tross signaled the approach of a man up the path from the river bank. As he came into the circle of light, we recognized Apanto.

"Everything is ready, Bak'a," he said. "Come."

It was not an important village, this one across the river from our camp. It was smaller and had much less power than Gankwe, the seat of a clan head. But enough men had assembled for the ceremonies to make a dance, and the women were standing about waiting as we came from the river through the palm-frond guard. The moon was again up, but moving clouds hid it from view or covered it with a haze which dimmed its brilliance. A few houses fronted on the little clearing where the dance was to be held, and here and there some oil lanterns had been placed.

Not everything, we soon learned, was ready, for drums were lacking. They had an agida, but the two others which were needed were not there. Poor villages very often had to borrow their drums from other settlements. The dancers stood about waiting.

We offered the tumao we had acquired, and Bayo returned to our camp for it. A large tin basin, turned upside down, gave the same metallic tenor voice as the apinti, and so with the makeshift orchestra the dancing began, two younger boys playing the kwakwa.

For a time it seemed as though we were only to see seketi. The children had had no opportunity at all to perform, and they stood about watching, while their elders danced the social dance we had seen so often. There was a tall man from a friendly village farther down the river whose dancing that night stood out. The careful awkwardness of his legs as he danced facing us, the carefully timed movements of arms and body showed us that in seketi, too, as the proverb ran, there were truly men on the lower river, as there were on the upper.

Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
Bush Negroes
Saramacca

A light rain fell, and for a while the dancing stopped. Deserting our benches, we joined the natives who clustered under the overhanging eaves of the houses, and sheltered ourselves from the shower. But the rain was soon over, and the moon came out again. The drummers took their places and the dancers resumed their seketi.

"Dance Kromanti," we urged, remembering Bayo, "we have seen much seketi."

"You will have to look out," said Apanto. "We have strong Kromanti here," as the drums began to call obia.

Bayo had been sitting behind us during the seketi. His face mirrored a frame of mind that was none too happy, for this was not the sort of dance that he had looked forward to. When Apanto gave the word to play Kromanti, however, Bayo rose, and when we next saw him, his head was low over the inverted tin basin which served for an spinti, and he was making the night throb with the intricacy of the messages he was sending to the strong spirits which were troubling him with their insistence for expression.

Where we sat, we could see the men becoming aware of the voices of the drums. Several rattles had made their appearance, and the sound they made as they were shaken in concert caused the men's bodies to grow rigid, while the women hovered uncertainly about. By now the evening's "play" was begun in earnest. No children remained to look on. At the moment, there was no dancing, for the men with the rattles, and those who were merely waiting for the spirit to come to them, moved about in the open place reserved for the dance, back and forth, waiting for their Kromanti spirits to enter their bodies. One man struck up a song, and the chorus carried the refrain, until interest in that song died down and another was sung.

These Kromanti songs were not of the lilting, rhythmic kind which other dances required. Some of them were slow and mournful, some quick and martial. Now they were singing to the Opete. The leader sang

"OBIA COMES!"

Opete kwasi Adjaini-e
Opete kwasi Adjaini-obia-e
Opete kwasi
Tide Adjaini-e wili kwee, kwee, kwee, kwee.

The chorus repeated,

Opete kwaee, Adjaini-e-yi
Opete kwaee, Adjaini-e-ye
Opete kwaee, Adjaini-e-kumasi!

They were becoming more and more agitated. The rattles sounded a faster tempo, the drums beat louder, and the music swung into another song.

Amaaa Djadja-e
O-e-e-e-e-e
Amaaa Djadja-e
O ye-e-e
Kuma, laka, mowa,
O-e Mama-e
O-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e . . .

This was a song of greeting for the Djadja spirit. Bayo still urged the rhythms out of the improvised apinti which he was playing. The drummers were calling all the Kromanti spirits, the buzzard called Opete, the jaguar, Tigri, and Djadja, the "devil." Would they come?

The question was answered soon enough. Out of the forest into the clearing ran one whose obia had come to him. It was Opete obia and, in his strength of possession, he had torn off two branches from a palm tree in the bush. These he held under his arms, so that, as he pranced about in his dance, he impersonated the awkwardness of the great carrion bird which gave its name to his obia. The tufts of palm leaves projecting from behind his flexed arms were wings. He leaped as in flight, then with startling rapidity he began turning round and round to the flapping of his wings.

Apanto suddenly seized a stick we held and, whirling it about our heads, was off to his dance, joining the six or

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Surumaccaner

man of each tribe has a uniform given him by the Dutch; it 698
consists of a high silk hat, a braided frock coat, a drum-
major's baton, and a metal plaque suspended around the
neck, with the arms of Surinam on it. The ensemble is pic-
turesque in the extreme. Captains have uniforms, too, but
less ornate ones. The great full-dress occasion is the palaver
at Paramaribo, held on or about the Queen's birthday, toward
the end of August. This is an occasion of festivity through-
out the colony.

The Governor receives the Bush Negro chiefs as he would
any foreign ambassadors, and the dignity of these men, the
aristocracy of their bearing, cannot be exceeded by white
plenipotentiaries. There is one difference: most of the Djuka
females remain at home. Indeed, Jankoeso has forbidden his
daughters to go to Paramaribo on any occasion whatsoever.
He himself must make a pilgrimage to the sacred medicine
city of Dahomey in preparation for the trip, at which time
he undergoes a purifying ritual at the hands of the high [783
obeiah priests, to muster good obeiahs for a salubrious passage. 793]

The only attempt of the Dutch to exercise any authority
over the Bush Negroes is in regard to the burial ceremony.
This has been a bone of contention for many years. The 643
Djuka custom is to allow the corpse to remain unburied for 764
a long period. The Dutch tried to stop this, not from any
desire to interfere with the customs of the natives, but for
sanitary reasons. The disagreement was finally compromised
by a time limit of three days between death and burial. This
regulation is usually not observed. Once they get back into
their remote villages, the Bush Negroes do as they please.

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Surinam

Chapter Nine

MEDICINE AND MAGIC

NO one in Djuka land dies a natural death. Death is caused by witchcraft. At Santi Gron on the Saramacca River, preparations are being made for a burial. The whole village is excited. The women wailing are the relatives of the dead man. Children are crying because they see others crying. Unseen drums throb dully, making the hot air pulsate. The corpse lies in an open shed with only three walls—a death house (*dede oso*). Two girls of fifteen or sixteen are fanning it steadily to keep the flies away. The man died more than a week ago; all this time the body had been lying on a platform out in the tropical heat to decompose.

It is black magic that kills. Therefore the Bush Negroes make an effort to find out who made the magic that killed this man. An ancient ritual is employed. Three to ten days the corpse is left unburied, and in the humid heat the flesh undergoes a partial liquefaction. The putrescent fluid is gathered in a calabash cup and carried around from door to door.

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Aucaner

766 643 [322] teresting things concerning burials. A Granman's or a captain's body is placed in a cave-like hole dug in the side of a hill, and is eventually sealed in. It is forbidden to throw dirt upon the bodies of such officials.

●744 In the case of an ordinary person, a large hole is dug in the ground in which the corpse is lowered. A plank is placed over the body, so that the dirt subsequently thrown into the hole will not come into direct contact with the body.

766 The bodies of albinos, idiots, and lepers are otherwise disposed of. These people are supposed to be related to the river, and are called *watra pikin*, or water children. Instead of being allowed to rot, their bodies are placed in a pit dug in the bank when the river is low. When the water rises, the corpse is washed out of its temporary tomb.

769 Every year the *azang pau*, the palm barrier across the village path, is renewed, and at this time prayers are said for the dead. The dead person's relatives have shaved off their forelocks when he died, and often again at intervals of three, six, and nine months thereafter. But after the lapse of a year there is no mourning; a large dance is held to signify that the period is terminated, and after that the dead man or woman is relegated to the position of an ancestor. The prayers then ask him to intercede with the gods for the benefit of those still among the living.

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

of a burning fire without being harmed. Bathing every day for nine days in water in which rusty scrap iron and peanut husks have been boiled renders a man impervious to the cut of a knife and his flesh capable of turning any blade. Stomach-ache is treated by drinking an infusion from the hollow handle of a dance rattle. Especially potent in all magic preparations are the bristles of *tamanua*, the anteater. *Oberiati watra*, another infusion, is drunk by men before going into the bush, to give them luck and strength. It is also possible to acquire strength or other virtues by rubbing one's body with the putrescent fluid gathered from the corpse of a dead man who possessed those qualities.

If a person should find fecal material in front of his hut or rotten eggs along the trail in such position as to make it likely for him to step upon it, it is certain that this material was placed there by a member of the community who is attempting to *wissi* or bewitch him. Anyone who removes this matter is liable to insanity.

Minor cuts and wounds may be treated with the bark of the *apracoayo* tree. This is ground up and mixed with the brew prepared from the leaves known as *pekein fol caca* (little rooster).

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

177 The method of finding out who is responsible for the
[408] death of a man is found in many parts of the West Coast. The details vary considerably, but the essential idea that death is caused by witchcraft, and that some individual is guilty, is found in West Africa as well as in South America.
[716] The method of binding the corpse on a platform, covered with blankets of weeds, comes from the Gold Coast.

177 A number of Bush Negro words are African in origin.
182 *Lo*, the Djuka word for clan, designates a village in Yoruba or Ibo. The *gaagaa*, the resounding plank which accompanies the drums, is possibly a Kikongo or M'pongwe word from the Ivory Coast. *Azeman*, meaning a kind of vampire, is an Ewe and Tshi word, as well as a Bush Negro term. The fetish house, the *kifunga*, is probably derived from Bacongo, Luango, Cameroons, or Togo, and the word itself is in all likelihood a Bacongo term. *Lerba*, meaning "river," is an Ewe word. *Akra*, designating a kind of ghost, is a Tshi word. *Mokuku*, designating a Bush Negro fireplace made with three lumps of clay, is a Kikongo word, and the custom itself is derived from the Yoruba, Slave Coast, the lower Niger, and the Central and East Sudan region.

177 The carved wooden locks, the quintessence of Bush Negro
[323] wood carving, are found also among the Ashanti, in Dahomey, and in the Sudan. The method of poisoning fish by
[224] beating into a stream the pulp of poisonous plants is common in South America among the Indians, but it is likewise found in West Africa among the Tshi, Yoruba, Togo, Congo, and Angolo peoples. The same is true of other Djuka fishing practices, such as the custom of fishing at night by torchlight.

/16 cont./

868 The children learn their dances and games at a very early
858 age and are always present at the festivals.

867 From earliest youth on they are taught to respect and
689 venerate older persons. offenses against this obligatory respect are severely punished.

868 The boys in particular are taken along to the forest at an early age and remain there in connection with the procuring of wood or other operations, as well as for hunting and fishing, and very quickly learn to swim.

515 Men, women, and children bathe separately in the river every day.

Chapter XI

Burial Services and Other Ceremonies

764 They celebrate the burial services with great solemnity. If one of them dies in Auca, that is, their land, then the corpse is cleaned, the nails are cut, and it is placed in a coffin, in which various and especially costly articles of clothing of the deceased are placed and to which all the relatives also add a new piece of cloth (usually blankets and pantjes) as remembrances, a farewell token on which much value is placed. Hence they always take care to have a sufficient stock of new and unused cloths.

Ordinarily the corpse lies in the open coffin for one day before the interment takes place, in order to bid it farewell. The relatives then sit around the coffin and weep ceaselessly /17/ in a mostly singsong manner peculiar to them, in which the visitors also join from time to time.

765 After the interment the closest blood relatives proceed to hold the days of mourning on a mat spread out on the ground for
538 eight days. During this time they weep loudly by turns, at the same time making the strangest gestures, while day and night, generally by turns, little stories with many allusions, and always ending with a moral solution, are told.

/72 cont./

979 691 641 The morality of the Refugee Blacks knows in effect only obligations of a social and religious order. As for everything concerning material life, each one has the absolute right, one could even say the duty, to act as he sees fit, insofar as he does not wrong anyone else.

643 67 64 [56] If the grand man gave an order obliging someone to act against his own interest, for example if he wished to lower arbitrarily the price of boats, this order would be lawfully void. If the grand man has very great personal influence, he can persuade the Boni that it is to their interest to obey such a prescription, but in no case can his command have the effect of imposing by force an arbitrary order foreign to the social and religious tradition; the present grand man is weak in character to boot, sensitive to the influence of the Creoles and very little given to exerting any authority.

643 791 In reality, the office of grand man is above all religious. The grand man centralizes, if one may say so, the struggle against evil forces and watches ceaselessly over the welfare of the collectivity.

643 764 When a man dies, his near relatives come to report on the questioning of the yɔɔka. Burial cannot take place until the grand man has made sure that all the prescriptions have been filled. People come to report to him again after the burial so that he can be sure that no suprahuman danger remains.

643 795 [182] The grand man has special power over the yɔɔka (spirits) of the dead, which the beliefs of the Refugee Blacks place on a level intermediate between the human and the divine. When one of these yɔɔka exerts against a lineage a vengeance (kunu) whose malignity goes beyond habitual bounds, the grand man beseeches it to stop; they allege that things go back to normal, at least for a time.

This power attributed to the grand man invests him, in the eyes of the Boni, with a suprahuman character. It is the very foundation of his political power.

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Boni

/158 cont./

156 The Boni woman, poor in emotional feelings, and jealous of her independence with respect to men, puts her pride into subsisting by her own efforts.

178 [156] The young women, even the ones with the freest habits, stay firmly attached to their village, to their plantings, and to the mode of life they received from their grandmothers. In fact, because of its structure and customs, the society of the Refugee Blacks has much less likelihood of suffering from the poisons spread by modern life than the patrilineal societies of Black Africa.

761 /159/ Death; Burial Rites

795 Death is for the Refugee Blacks an event of extreme gravity. In order to ward off danger and permit the yɔ́ka of the dead person to take its place among the ancestors, the unstinting cooperation of everyone is required.

764 765 181 [621] [619] The ceremonies which have to do with death and mourning are by far the most important ones in the day-to-day life of the Refugee Blacks; for each one they represent a very heavy material load which is accepted without recriminations. It is really a veritable mobilization, which takes place within the framework of the village and not of the lineage. The apparatus set into motion is independent of the lineage, for it must function in the same way for an outsider, Djuka or Saramaka, who dies during a trip.

764 868 769 Participation in the burial rites is for all an essential religious duty. From childhood the Boni are prepared for this task and become, some of them kisimɛ̃ (coffin-makers), others ɔlɔmɛ̃ (grave-diggers), some others wasimɛ̃ (bathers of the dead).

767 787 Kisimɛ̃ and ɔlɔmɛ̃. It can be said that in each village, ɔlɔmɛ̃ and kisimɛ̃ constitute customary societies, provided with an organization and wielding veritable powers for the duration of their work.

/159 cont./

769 94 [146] --The kisimɛ̃ command the village during the whole time the coffin is being made and can requisition anyone to help them.

--The ɔ̀ɔmɛ̃ are masters of the river while their work lasts. In particular they can requisition travelers passing through to help them, and even confiscate their provisions. This is puisi, a joke. But as Mr. W. F. Van Lier also has us observe, this custom has a deep meaning: it reminds everyone that participation in the burial of a dead person is a fundamental religious duty.

767 467 The organization of these customary societies is, at least among the Boni, very rudimentary.

In each village there is a head of the ɔ̀ɔmɛ̃ who is acquainted with the topography of the cemetery and the rites to be carried out (bedemɛ̃ fu ɔ̀o).

In Boniville, in 1958, this was Bubuman (Papalinon);
In Loka, Tabiki?, not replaced at the beginning of 1958;
In Asisi, Antonu (Awara Bakka).

If he is absent, someone is sent to get the head of the ɔ̀ɔmɛ̃ of another village.

Likewise, in each village there is a head of the kisimɛ̃:
In Boniville, this was Fintiman (Dju);
In Asisi, it was Boofo (Awara Bakka);
In Kormotibo, it was Aténi. /160/

764 496 The people willingly lend one another assistance from one village to the other, with no need even to ask for help, and even if it is a question of burying a foreigner in the country, a Saramaka or a Djuka for example, who dies in Boni country.

769 467 [152] For the making of the coffin it is rare not to find about 15 kisimɛ̃ spontaneously met together when four or five would be enough. They like this labor very much, which proceeds in an atmosphere of joyous over-excitement in the center of admiring spectators.

/160 cont./

769 According to the moral law of the Refugee Blacks, all work must be paid for. The work of the ɔ̀ɔ̀mɛ̂ and kisimɛ̂ is no exception to the rule: the dead person must pay for what is done for him; to this end, his brothers appropriate pieces of cloth from his trunk (about 30 if the dead man was rich) and since that would not suffice, the relatives and friends of the dead man come to swell these sums by giving additional pieces of cloth.

If the dead man was very poor and no longer had cloth in good condition, the people of the lineage must give enough so that at least six may be given to the kisimɛ̂ and about ten to the ɔ̀ɔ̀mɛ̂. If there are too few pieces of cloth for each one to be able to receive a whole one, they are cut up into small pieces, but it is absolutely indispensable for each one to be paid, even if symbolically.

764 Unfolding of the burial rites. These rites are complex, and the ceremonies in which they unfold are always very confused. Even if one is acquainted with the general idea and understands the language rather well, they are very difficult to follow. For [128] clearness in this account, we shall first give a résumé, which will be followed by observations collected in particular cases.

763 The day of the death is taken up by weeping and lamentations and the sending of messengers to the neighboring villages.

/160 cont./

As soon as the death is announced, the bisimɛ̂ hastily construct a platform called papay (1), while waiting for the

1. Papay = canon wood /F. canon, from L. canna reed, pipe, tube -- Tr./ (Cecropia Sp.), rapid-growing shrub similar to the African parasol-tree; it is used for the construction of the platform because of the great lightness of its stem.

building of the coffin which will be undertaken the next day.

The wasimɛ̂ bathe the dead man with warm water after transporting him to a special place in the village. A hole is dug for the run-off of this water and closed up again afterward. This place is strictly reserved for this use; people do not go there any other time (at Boniville it is behind hut No. 5).

The wasimɛ̂ are two in number, two men and two women; in each lineage there are at least one man and one woman who are acquainted with this work.

The wasimɛ̂ remove from the dead man every object (metal, ɔbia, etc.) and dress him in clean clothes. Cotton is put in his nostrils and a chin-strap put on, all of which will be removed at the moment when the coffin is closed (so that the yɛ́kɛ of the dead man will not be impeded in its life beyond the grave).

The body placed in the papay is carried under the mortuary shed (kɛ́ɛyɔ́ɔ = house /161/ of tears). A tuft of hair and the fingernails are taken, which are wrapped in a cloth and hung inside the kɛ́ɛyɔ́ɔ.

/161 cont./

• 1764 ~~~~The dead person's spouse, his nearest relatives, and his children come and hang their hammocks inside the krayasu, where they will live until broko dg (eighth day after the death).

[533] [535] The village people begin the nukka songs and dance, which will last part of the night, while the friends and near relatives of the dead man lament seated, head covered with a cloth.

[824] The first day after the death, as soon as it is morning, the kisimE arrive, and begin to make the coffin, using mahogany boards always kept on hand, thanks to the head of the village.

[673] The women of the dead man's lineage prepare a meal which is offered to the kisimE about 1:00 P.M. at the end of their work.

While the coffin is being made, the dead man's friends and distant relatives arrive in crowds from the neighboring villages, bringing tafia and cloth as offerings. Two kisimE lay these pieces of cloth one by one on the body saying, "So-and-so buries you."

[967] These pieces of cloth are divided up; about 15 are put into the coffin by the kisimE, part of the rest serve as pay for the kisimE, part as pay for the ɔlɔmE; another part, finally, is used for dressing the widower and his co-wives (or the widow), showing thus that during the whole mourning period they live dependent on the dead person.

Then the kisimE close the coffin without any other rites taking place. The late arrivers who bring more cloths knock the coffin saying, "I bury you," and put them down on the ground.

[692] The work of the kisimE is over; they bring the body outside the krayasu, in front of which has assembled the council called iEnti kuutu, which constitutes the judicial apparatus of the Boni.

/141 cont./

764 692 This tribunal is charged with establishing the causes of death and rendering a decision on this subject which has the force of law. But it is above all charged with judging the dead person, with determining whether he has lived worthily, whether he has the right to be buried according to the rites and to be invoked as an ancestor, or whether on the contrary he was a wisimã.

[543] [583] The grand man designates one or two lineage heads to preside over the council and "command" the dead person until the burial.

The grand man designates who will lead the assemblage and will "command" the dead person until the burial.

764 692 213 This cannot be the head of the dead person's lineage, for no one can at the same time be judge and judged.

Ex.: for Bénitï (Dju) this was Popo — head of the Lapé lo

for Atikati (Dju) it was Konadéu — head of the Awara Bakka lo

for Kotolida (Aw.B.) it was Tafanié — head of the Papélitou lo

for Way (Dip. II) it was Tafanié —. /162/

764 787 The 2nd and 3rd days after the death are given over to the interrogation of the dead person, which on the evening of the first day had scarcely begun.

[184] The rites of this interrogation vary from one village to another; in certain villages they begin to carry the dead man even before the construction of the coffin; the questions are not asked everywhere in the same fashion.

[171] The dead person is interrogated by methods widespread in West Africa and which are related to spiritualism: the coffin is carried on the heads of two men, feet forward. The dead man is supposed to push the bearers forward to say yes, and to make them now their heads from left to right to say no.

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/162 cont./

764 769 [213] In principle the forward bearer (who is called beamon by analogy with a host) must belong to the dead person's lineage. Apart from this restriction, the bearers can be (and are in fact) any people whatever, the only condition required being that they be extremely vigorous, because the load they carry is at the limit of their strength.

Fraud can exist in isolated cases, but in the great majority of cases there is no doubt as to the good faith of the bearers; they give contradictory answers, go ahead and back interminably, until, exhausted, they are raised up again by others. Actually, the interpretation of these automatic movements does not differ essentially from any process of divination.

[764] The dead person is interrogated from the age of four or five years up. If it is a very young child, he is not interrogated, but the causes of his death are sought by interrogating possessed people, and if there is reason to, the kunu is appeased in the same fashion.

764 789 754 At the beginning of the interrogation the tribunal tries to make sure that the dead person was not a wisimã. After sending the bearers to the other end of the village, the president of the assemblage has two young men hidden in huts; then he has the bearers called, saying to the dead person: "I have lost So-and-so and So-and-so, find them." If the dead person was an upright man, he must have acquired a suprahuman clairvoyance permitting him to direct his bearers straight away toward the huts in question. If he was a wisimã, he will be as if blind; his bearers go wandering in vain from hut to hut.

They state that this test always succeeds.

764 789 761 [796] [784] The interrogation proceeds interminably. The causes of death are taken up. The first question is: is it a god who killed you? The answer is nearly always yes, and they proceed by elimination in order to arrive, for example, at learning that it is an Ampuku, that it is the Ampuku borne by So-and-so. By what the kunu was set in motion, how to appease it, is not the

Goldsmith--245 K-5 (1946-1956) 1961 Yes Ruth Negro: Yes
Soul

/162 cont./
business of the tribunal. The people of the dead person's lineage will have to settle that among themselves after the obsequies. The role of the tribunal is to make official the cause of death and give it the force of law.

Then the inheritance is taken up in the presence of the near relatives of the dead man. The questions are asked successively: "To whom dost thou leave thy boat...?" "To whom dost thou leave thy gun(s)...?" The coffin moves each time

1. That, unless the dead man has, before his death, in front of witnesses, formally indicated the apportionment of his belongings; in such a case, questions are asked only for the objects whose attribution had not been clearly specified.

toward one of the people present. /Figs. 22 and 23 appear here/

/163/ At the end of the third day after the death the burial is prepared; the dead person is asked from daybreak on whether he is ready for that; if not it can be postponed until the next day.

The sapi have been working at the cemetery since the beginning of the day. They are young and strong men who have to work slowly, for not a drop of sweat may fall into the grave or their arms would risk remaining prisoner in it.

About 4:00 P.M. the bearers promenade the dead person one last time in the village for a supreme adieu. The near relatives go to the wharf. The dead man is hoisted into a canoe while the ayatti drum calls his yarka so that it will not remain in the village.

6:Hurault--245a K-5 (1948-1958) 1951 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8 Boni

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Fig. 22. Offering of food to the ancestors.

764
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Fig. 23. Interrogation of the dead person.

/163 cont./

764 About 5:00 P.M. the coffin arrives at the cemetery wharf and is given over to the ɔlɔmɛ̃. No other rite is carried out. It is placed at the bottom of the grave; a layer of round logs separates it from the pile of earth which is put back on top. The burial is finished about six o'clock.

Notes taken at the burial of Way in Kormotibo (January 25, 1957) (1st day after death).

I arrive in Kormotibo at nine o'clock. There are two dead people in the village: Sokodo, 37 years old, who is to be buried the next day, and Way, 65, who died in Maripasoula and whose body was transported the day before.

764 787 [892] [822] When we moored, I noticed at the south end of the village the bearers of Sokodo's coffin, alone and immobile. Arriving near the mortuary shed, I find Captain Kondoku, who presides over the lãnti kuutu, and Captain Poopu, head of the village. Kondoku tells me that he is in the act of proceeding to a new test on Sokodo; he has just had two young men hidden, M... and G...; and the dead man is called upon to find them without hesitation.

I look around us. There is nobody nearby; a few women are attending to their occupations, indifferent to a scene observed many a time. It seems as though Kondoku is doing that for himself alone.

The coffin-bearers appear, coming from the other end of the village. Without hesitation they go toward the mortuary shed, enter it, and the end of the coffin stops before the hammock covered with a large mosquito net spread to the ground, where Way's widower, the Saramaka Gamba, is seated.

To my great surprise I see two young men go out. Nothing revealed their presence under the hammock, and Kondoku, who was talking with me, has neither said nor done anything which could direct the bearers. Nobody present could have

/163 cont./

764 787 given any indication whatever. Besides, how would he have had time to make himself understood by two men walking at top speed, crushed by their heavy load and looking straight ahead?

This upsets all the ideas I had formed about this test. The only hypothesis that remains is that the bearers have been "tipped off" by the man who went to get them (an old man of the council). But is it possible that such a crude fraud could be current practice? The Boni are far from being stupid, they are ever suspicious /164/ and they are too talkative for such deceptions not to be laid bare by their perpetrators themselves.

Under these conditions, how can it operate--this collective suggestion which explains most of the rites of the Refugee Blacks? I can't explain it to myself.

764 769 322 [412] Manufacture of the Coffin. The kisimã are gathered around a pile of boards. They are about 15 in number, commanded by Boofo, head of the kisimã of Asisi, and Aténi (Asisi-Dipélu II). A pile of boards is at their feet; some work with a small hand saw, others with an adze; the fitting is done with a machete. /Fig. 21 appears here./

They take measurements with a graver. The bottom board is cut first, then the front and back ends. The outline of the back end, in the shape of a truncated diamond, results from a rather complex construction with the compass which I have not time to report.

764 769 [152] [262] The work is done noisily in an atmosphere of crude farce. The whole time it lasts, the kisimã exert veritable command over the village. The coconut trees of Kormotibo are pillaged for their benefit. The village women prepare the rice for the meal which must, according to custom, be offered to them upon finishing the coffin about noon.

/164 cont./

764 767 322 I see the head of the kisimã make ready the fitting of the lower lateral wings. Without nailing it, he places the back end on the bottom plank, giving it the proper inclination. They put

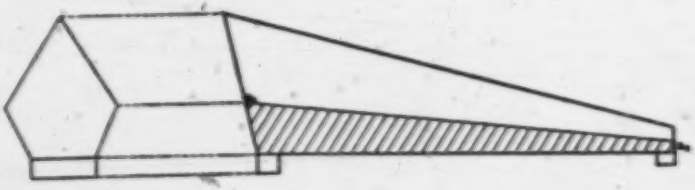

Fig. 21. A Boni coffin.

in place the board which is to serve as a wing. An elastic string smeared with soot is stretched between a_1 and a_2; they pinch it in the middle and in falling back it traces the line $a_1 a_2$ on the wing.

(412) The cutting out of the wing is done with a saw and the fitting with the machete, then with a plane.

About 11 o'clock they begin to nail the wings. According to the rites, several kisimã accompany in cadence the noise of the hammer blows by hitting the coffin with pieces of wood. Why this ceremony? None of the kisimã can explain it. Perhaps it would be considered dangerous for one man to carry out alone one of the operations relating most directly to death.

764 While the kisimã work, Way's friends and relatives do not stop /165/ arriving; their boats jam the wharf. The people wend their way toward the mortuary shed, men on one side, women on the other. It is the women who bring pieces of cloth (including those given by their brothers and husbands); the men carry tafia in bottles.

Upon arriving the women sit down, cover their faces and lament a few minutes, then sit down with the others in front of the mortuary shed. On the other side of the shed the men are seated, immobile on their small benches. An elder busies himself

/165 cont./

764 at collecting in a large demijohn the tafia brought. It will be used at the dances which will take place that very evening.

764 767 About 1:00 P.M. the coffin is nearly finished, the upper wings are fitted and ready to be nailed. This is the moment when, according to custom, the meal must be served. But nothing is to be seen; the village women have talked more than worked, and their preparations are far from finished.

Time passes; discontent grows among the kisimã, who threaten to stop work. About 2:00 P.M. the women come in a procession led by the oldest ones to apologize for the delay; they have to pay a forfeit of a bottle of maripa oil, in consideration of which the kisimã agree to eat; the scene lasts at least 30 minutes, in a flood of words whose transcription in extenso would fill a book.

[782] Before the meal an offertory rite is gone through; two of the youngest among the kisimã slowly go around the mortuary shed carrying a dish of food; at the same time they eat, they throw food on the ground, without uttering a single word. Then they go to the river where the dish is washed.

[782] After the meal the coffin is consecrated by the sacrifice of a rooster. The leader of the kisimã sprinkles with its blood first the bottom at the back, then the upper side wings.

The presenting of pieces of cloth, having gone on since noon, comes to an end. Two kisimã stand beside the body; a woman of the lineage unfolds and hands to them the cloths given by the people present.

The kisimã grab the piece of cloth and unfold it. One of them says these words: "N... beli yu, umã (N... buries you, woman)." They do that if they recognize the cloth offered by N...; if not, they simply say: "Someone buries you, woman." Then they put the cloth on the preceding ones piled up on the body. There may be 126 camisas (1) and

764 767 [439] /165 cont./ There may be 126 camisas (1) and

1. Pieces of cotton goods about 1.10 x 0.75 meters. These cloths are manufactured in Holland especially for the Refugee Black clientele.

15 large pieces of cloth. About 30 camisas have been taken from the dead woman's trunk; the others have been given by the people present, the near relatives each giving several, the other relatives only one.

Their work finished, the kisimã burn the shavings and [783] scraps of board. They pass their tools through a flame to purify them of the stains of death. /166/

About 3:00 P.M. the coffin is brought into the mortuary shed by the kisimã. The kisimã, who have complete charge of this phase of the obsequies, count the pieces of cloth and divide them up. One part will be used for their pay, others for the pay of the gravediggers. Fifteen pieces of cloth and about [765] ten ordinary camisas will be placed in the coffin. The rest will be used for clothing the widower who, during the whole period of mourning, will thus remain symbolically dependent upon the dead person; if there are any left over, they are distributed to the members of the dead person's lineage.

Placing in the Coffin. About three o'clock four of the [292] kisimã take their places beside the coffin; they gird their loins with a camisa as the Refugee Blacks always do before carrying out a religious act. In the greatest silence they spread out the 15 large pieces of cloth inside the coffin, allowing them to fall to the ground at right and left. Next, two of them lift up the body while the others slip the coffin underneath (for the whole duration of the burial ceremonies, the body must remain at the exact place where it was put down. The coffin does not rest directly on the ground but is put on a mat through the

/166 cont./

764 767 medium of two round logs. This ritual seems to have as its purpose restricting the defilement of death for the village.).

The body is put back down in the deepest silence, with the greatest care, into the coffin. A pillow is put under the head.

[152] Those present show no emotion. The widower, the Saramaka Gamba, who has remained seated in his hammock since morning, turning his back to his wife's body, does not stir.

The kisimã bring the edges of the pieces of cloth back over the body and put on, in addition, a few camisas of the ordinary kind. Before the upper wings of the coffin are put in place, one of them gently removes the wads of cotton which had been put in the dead woman's nostrils.

Then the upper wings of the coffin are nailed down, always according to the same rite, blows struck in cadence with pieces of wood accompanying the hammer blows.

[692] The role of the kisimã is ended; they give over the dead woman to the council, lãnti kuutu, charged with judging her.

764 787 Search for the Causes of Death. The ceremony begins about four o'clock in the greatest confusion, as is usual among the Refugee Blacks; it is impossible to understand who is really a member of the council and who is not a member, everybody talking at once.

I think I understand that the grand man has designated Captains Kondoku (Asisi-Awara Bakka) and Tafanié (Papaïston) to preside over the ceremony. In fact, it is neither the one nor the other who begins the interrogation, but a man from Papaïston village, Agodéba, a venerable old man whose torso is molded in a deplorably shoddy jersey calling to mind a rugby match.

/166 cont./

764 787 The coffin is placed at the edge of the mortuary shed, the front turned toward the spectators. Agodéba sits down before the front of the coffin. According to ceremony, he enters into contact with the /167/ yɔrka of the dead woman by pouring water on the ground before the coffin and calling her by name. He says the same sentences several times in different forms: "Thou hast lived here ... thou hast had children in this village; now death has killed thee. Thou must tell us who killed thee."

764 787 761

[292] Two men, B... (L'Enfant Perdu, Dipélu I) and A... (Asisi-Awara Bakka) come forward, gird their loins with a camisa, and, aided by several others, lift the coffin. B..., who is of the dead woman's lineage, takes the forward position.

For about ten minutes the two bearers try to put themselves into a state of passivity permitting them to receive fitly the promptings of the dead woman; no question whatever is asked. They are seen to make contradictory movements, to go forward tilting the coffin from left to right, which means yes and no at the same time. Sometimes a sudden impulse appears to draw them far from the spectators, they are seen going from hut to hut, wheeling around, going away again.

Finally they come back. Agodéba asks: "Is it a god who struck thee down?" The answer seems to be yes. "Is it a Papa gadu, an Ampuku, a Kɛ̃ntasasu?" Contradictory answers, the people present lean toward the negative.

Agodéba continues: "Is it a yɔrka who killed thee?" Confused and contradictory movements of the coffin. Agodéba begins again: "Is it a god?" Someone among those present shouts: "Don't you see that she meant yes, speaking of the yɔrka? Agodéba gets angry, takes his hat, and leaves the meeting. General hubbub. Half an hour of words, broken by various movements and sham exits, is required in order to bring him to take his place again.

/167 cont./

764 787 761 The bearers are changed and the interrogation continues, still as confused as before. Captain Tafanié, who arrives in the midst of all this, thinks that the dead woman does not want to speak in front of such a large crowd. He asks her to designate which of the people present will form a small group. I see the front of the coffin stop in front of an old Saramaka named Yasu, then successively in front of about ten of those present of various ages and origins. They stand up, take their little benches in their hands, and go to join Tafanié under a large tree in a spot to the side; the interrogation resumes; by nightfall a sure fact has been established: Way was killed by a god. They will resume the next day in order to find out what god is concerned and how to appease him.

764 [114] Notes taken at the funeral ceremonies for Kotoïda (Afi lineage) October 22-23, 1956 (2nd and 3rd days after death).

I arrive at Asisi on the 22nd at eight o'clock. Kotoïda died on the twentieth; the first part of the ceremony has been finished.

[692] It is Tafanié, head of Papaïston village, who presides over the lãnti kuutu.

Tafanié himself has directed the making of the coffin (he is a kisimã) with the help of boards held in reserve on the spot. The work was finished at nine o'clock in the morning.

The body was placed in the coffin immediately, and after the presentation of the pieces of cloth, the wings were nailed. /168/

When I arrive at the wharf, the coffin is placed in the mortuary shed. The near relatives of the deceased (sons, daughters, and nephews) as well as the husband and the co-wife compelled to take part in the mourning are seated in their hammocks attached to the posts of the shed. The first-mentioned manifest no apparent sorrow whatever. Husband and

/168 cont./

764 co-wife, on the contrary, are completely veiled and show by their state of prostration the keenest sorrow. Each of them is assisted by a female relative who supports them when they have to move somewhere else, for they are supposed to be too overcome to move alone.

764 787 761 The interrogation as to the causes of death has already taken place the day before, but Tafanié proclaims, in front of me, the result of it to the latest arrivals: the deceased was struck down by a yɔrka which pursues the lineage with its kunu. She had already received several warnings in the form of illness; the yɔrka had demanded a payment which she and her near relatives had neglected to furnish. Impossible to learn anything further before being able to interrogate this yɔrka, whose habitual bearer has left for Saint-Laurent. It is necessary to wait for his return in order to mollify the yɔrka's anger.

764 769 778 [613] About ten o'clock the members of the lãnti kuutu go toward the fraga tiki of the Awara Bakka lo, in front of which they all sit down on their stools. I notice that not a single man of the dead person's lineage appears in the front row. In it I recognize Popo (Lapé), Poopu (Dipélu II, Kormotibo), Tafanié (Papaïston). The one who is speaking is a foreigner passing through, a very aged and respected Djuka.

[782] The elders invoke Masa Gadu and the ancestors in general, asking them to protect them from adversity in the future; then the offering of water and tafia takes place (no cane juice). I notice that a little is poured on each of the secondary fraga tiki erected for the sake of each one of the ancestors who pursue another lineage with their kunu. That lasts about a quarter of an hour.

764 787 776 428 424 Next someone goes to ask the deceased to whom she bequeaths the Papa gadu god which manifested itself in her; for the gods are bequeathed like the rest of the inheritance, even if those concerned are divinities which exercise the kunu

6:Hurault--255 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes: SR8 Boni

764 787 796 428 424

/168 cont./
against the lineage. The god ratifies this legacy or not; in general it follows, they say, the wishes of its bearer and manifests itself some time afterward in the designated heir.

The coffin is placed on the heads of two men: Tafanié puts the questions with authority. He begins first by making sure of the passivity of the bearers, invites the dead woman to push their heads forward to say yes, to give them an impulse from right to left to say no.

The coffin advances and draws back several times; its weight is at the limit of what the two men can support. Two secondary bearers help the rear bearer, preventing the coffin from falling.

1. /Footnote at bottom of p. 168; no reference to it on the page/ Let us recall that this lineage, too few in numbers to constitute a separate social unit, lives with the Awara Bakka, with whom it has no connection through kinship or alliance.

[613] [621]

The dead woman suddenly leads her bearers across the village. We see it come back /169/ a quarter of an hour afterward, accompanied by a woman of about 35 years, Moni, in front of whom it stopped.

Tafanié asks whether it wishes to leave its god to her; the dead woman confirms. Upon the statement of this legacy Moni's face reflects no gladness at all, nor any fear.

They explain to me that the designated heiress can in no way refuse this legacy. She must immediately begin her instruction given by a teacher, in order to become a suitable bearer. The expenses of her instruction are borne by her lineage.

764 /169 cont./
787 They will be paid when the gita has been "arranged," that is,
776 has lost the bestial character of the beginning and when the god
428 can express itself in intelligible fashion.

764 There and then they busy themselves with transferring
789 the god out of the body of the deceased. An obiaman well
789 known in the cult of the Papa gadu, Goutu (Dju) and his pupil
Balan (Aw.B.) come with calabashes containing infusions of leaves. Four or five women having a Papa gadu come and line up behind them. The heiress, with an extremely vexed air, takes her place among them, clothed with the emblems of the god of the dead woman; they are going to call their gods who will dance in honor of Kotoïda's god.

The obiaman and his pupil for several minutes trickle the infusion of herbs over the coffin, using packets of herbs like sponges, then they "wash" the women, including the postulant; he gives them the rest of the calabash to drink. One of the women, Samabun, falls immediately to the ground, attacked by the lowest form of possession: she drags herself on her belly like a snake (these are the first forms of the gita when it has not yet been "arranged." In her case that has lasted four years, contrary to what ordinarily happens. The scene was certainly anticipated, for she had put on European panties. The other women also drink but are not possessed; they leave to dress for dancing.

[534] The agida drum taken out of the god's chapel begins to beat, accompanied by two apinti.

The female bearers of Papa gadu arrive at the sound of the agida, smeared with pemba and carrying /wearing?--Tr./ the insignia of the god. Six come in all. They are not in a state of possession; only two will reach it. The first possessed woman keeps crawling on the ground, gropingly approaching the drum which she embraces, lying on her back. It is torn away from her. The obiaman continue to come to "wash"

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[586]

/169 cont./
her from time to time in order to help the god to manifest itself. The crowd presses around the women dancers who execute the greatest variety of figures. At times they embrace each other two by two in the Boni manner. The onlookers jump for joy.

The scene lasts about half an hour, then, at the signal given by one of them, the possessed ones scatter and begin to run through the village: this is the moment for the gods to pay the musicians. Each person rushes to hide his belongings, for the gods will steal anything in the village without anyone being able to prevent them: this is their way of paying.

Soon the possessed women come back, putting down at the feet of the musicians a heap of incongruous objects: /170/ calabashes, cloth, paddles, etc., which their owners come to recover by means of bottles of beer and eggs. Then the women who were truly possessed come back to their normal state and all go home.

This dance was not a success; those present think that it is because the women bearers had drunk tafia, which the Papa gadu detest.

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Inheritance. The dead woman is asked to whom she bequeaths her clearings. She answers: "To her family," this being understood because the bearers move parallel to the people present without designating anybody. Under these conditions the property must be distributed (Kotoïda having no children) among her classificatory nephews. Actually, the plantations still farmable will go to Samabun, her sister's daughter.

[591]

Inheritance of the house does not come up, for the dead woman lived in her husband Empalé's house.

The boat is left to Samabun.

Held back are the personal objects, money, jewelry, fabrics. When the mourning is lifted, the eldest of the surviving brothers or sisters in the classificatory sense will make the distribution among the near relatives.

/170 cont./

428 613 It is very clear in Kotoïda's case that the inheriting is within the matrilineage in the strict sense, bɛɛ. Only the members of the Afi lineage to which she belonged can profit by it.

• 764 Burial. About 2:00 P.M. the women of the lineage who had been preparing the food for the ɔlɔmɪ since morning leave by canoe in the direction of the cemetery.

At three o'clock the last preparations begin. The occupants of the mortuary shed, completely veiled and supported by their near relatives, go to take up positions at the wharf for the last farewells (for they will not go to the cemetery).

The coffin is carried through the village one last time. This is the farewell of the dead woman to her family. The objects used in mourning are carefully collected, the earth of the shed floor raked up wherever the sanies of the cadaver might have fallen, and the whole put on the papay which is placed on the mortuary bark.

[775] At three o'clock an apinti drum is placed on the wharf to call the dead person (it is obviously a question of preventing the yɔrka from remaining in the village). The dead person turns up at the wharf. The coffin passes over a freshly cut banana-tree trunk placed at the limit of the village and of the beach. This is the symbolic passing of the dead person out of the world of the living. It is put on the canoe while the lamentations of the near relatives resound. The scene is not lacking in grandeur.

[783] The canoe draws slowly away, the drummer in the bow, while the spectators go down in a long procession to wash themselves free of the defilement of death.

[767] At four o'clock they arrive at the cemetery. The bearers of the dead person who have taken places in the canoe pass their burden to the ɔlɔmɪ who have come to the edge of the river. This to mark the fact that /ʌlʌ/ the ɔlɔmɪ are in authority at the cemetery. The bearers will only be present at the ceremony.

/171 cont./

764 The women who had come to carry the food of the ɔlɔmĩ go away, their work finished. Only two of them, not especially old, remain.

[787] We arrive on a little separated space where a last interrogation takes place. It is Antonu, head of the ɔlɔmĩ of Asisi who speaks, while Tansia (Dipélu I) and Tyolo (Dju), basia or party-head of the ɔlɔmĩ of Asisi serve as bearers.

764 787 The dead woman is asked for instructions as to the choice of the men she designates as busimĩ (hunters, fishermen), intended to procure the food for the guests on the day of the broko dɛ. The coffin advances successively toward six men. Each one of these asks: "Is it really I?" I see the forward bearer, his eyes strangely fixed, nod in their direction.

764 At four o'clock we arrive in front of the grave, about 100 meters from the riverside. It is dug with neat edges; it is about 2 meters deep, 2 meters 50 long, and 1 meter wide. It has the trapezoidal shape of the coffin.

A bench is cut in half with a blow of the machete to make two supports placed in the bottom of the grave.

The coffin is lowered to the bottom by means of the cloth ropes which enclosed it. These ropes are then pulled back up. Several shots are fired. Not a word is spoken. About ten thick round logs about 20 centimeters in diameter are placed side by side on the grave and the earth thrown over them. The ɔlɔmĩ work with the shovel and hoe; the pile of earth rapidly reaches a meter in height.

Then the head of the ɔlɔmĩ stops the work. He passes over the grave several times, jumping with feet together. Next, passing the bundle of cloth ropes several times around his legs, he addresses the akka of those present, admonishing them not to stay in the hole.

/171 cont./

764 Work is then resumed. Those present who are not ɔ̀ɔ̀mɛ̀, including me, are invited to throw several shovels of earth. On top of the mound are placed the papay and the objects used in the mourning, topped by the dead woman's bench. Then those present go away without haste and wash at the wharf. Several shots are again fired while the canoes go away.

The graves are spaced about 10 meters apart. The dead are not grouped by lineages; the cemetery is extended as needed, and the dead person is put in the first available spot. Thus Kotoïda (Awara Bakka) is placed beside Asoïda (Lapé), a hundred-year-old woman dead a few months before.

They show me the graves of village heads I have known, Dioïé († in 1951), Atikati († in 1953). The mounds are already half settled down, the brush on them is as much as a meter high.

[769] One of my boatmen pours a little tafia on his mother's grave which is at the edge /172/ of the path. None of those present leaves the group to go to the grave of his relatives.

Thanking Ceremonies. On the twenty-third at eight [692] o'clock, the ɛ̀ɛ̀ti kuutu is convened and sits at the edge of the mortuary shed.

[769] The ɔ̀ɔ̀mɛ̀ and in a general way those who have worked on behalf of the dead person (only about ten remain, the others have left to work) are seated opposite the men of the dead woman's lineage.

It is always Tafanié who speaks. Béna (Dju), seated before the ɔ̀ɔ̀mɛ̀, turned toward the speaker, plays the role of respondent. Tafanié thanks all those who have worked on behalf of the dead person, detailing at length the various jobs, then citing their various lineages; he repeats the same thing in several ways and his speech is interminable. Sometimes he [693] interrupts himself to put in a good joke or drink a bumper of [415] tafia. A 15-liter demijohn is seen circulating inside the shed.

/172 cont./

764 578 Suddenly an incident erupts. Baafu (Lapé) insinuates that Agidibon (Aw.B.) is helping himself immoderately. Insulting words are exchanged. Agidibon leaves the council. General commotion. The tumult calms down after a quarter of an hour.

764 The speaker now thanks the foreigners passing through, Saramaka and Djuka, who helped at the obsequies.

764 787 Someone puts down on the ground a paddle on which is attached a bundle wrapped in cloth. It is the dead woman's paddle, and the bundle contains her hair. It is kept until the [965] broko dɛ (it seems, in fact, that this is the reason for this celebration) in order to keep contact with the dead woman's yaka for the further questions people might have to ask it (1).

1. It seems that on this point custom envisages especially the case of near relatives of the dead person traveling on the river at the time of the death, and who could not be present at the burial.

Then, several ɔlɔmɛ will go to the cemetery to bury the bundle inside the mound.

The spectators go toward a shaded spot, for it is near noon and the sun is overwhelming.

Sosoman carries the front of the paddle and Tansia the back. Without any question at all being asked, they circulate in the village for a long time. Several times I see them make contradictory movements, nod their heads forward and sideways at the same time.

Here they are back again near Tafanié. To my great surprise Tafanié asks questions in a low voice, cupping his hands in front of his mouth.

/172 cont./

764 Several times the paddle is seen to answer affirmatively,
789 then negatively. Not one of those present can understand what is said, but not one shows impatience or doubt.

[613] Suddenly Tafanié orders his assistants to cut rods: the dead woman has asked that the people of her own lineage be beaten, guilty of having neglected the yɔrka's warnings. On seeing these preparations the people of Kotolda's lineage /173/ run away in confusion in every direction while their adversaries pursue them with the appearance of having a very good time. Some take refuge in the water, others in the bush; none whatever can be caught.

Completely symbolic punishment, moreover, for at the end of ten minutes they are seen to reappear and take their places again among those present.

764 The obsequies are ended. Only the deceased's near relatives stay seated in their hammocks under the mortuary shed. They will remain there until the broko dɛ.

764 Payments of the ɔlɔmɛ. The ɔlɔmɛ divide up one lot of
769 cloth, keeping track of what they have received in the preceding obsequies. That does not appear to cause any discussion. If, after this, someone who has not furnished any work wants to take one of these pieces of cloth, he may do so by offering tafia to the people present.

766 Funeral ceremonies for people who die while traveling. If a
789 man dies in the course of a distant trip, they take from the
795 cadaver before burying it his hair and fingernails, which are brought back to his native village; in fact, it is assumed that as long as a fragment of the body is not buried, the yɔrka remains attached to it; hair and fingernails will therefore permit the interrogation of the yɔrka and will be buried in the cemetery with the usual rites.

/173 cont./

764 Broko dɛ. The eighth day after death, a ceremony called broko dɛ takes place, not to be confused with the lifting of mourning. This ceremony marks the end of the burial rites proper; when it is ended, the dead person can no longer be questioned directly; the period of mourning begins.

[613] It is a very simple ceremony which attracts few people and happens almost entirely within the lineage.

[538] At nightfall they begin to relate Anansi toli, those traditional tales which make the audience vibrate together and [535] create a special atmosphere. Then come the sɔnge, susa, and awasa dances which last all night.

764 769 The next day each one busies himself at small jobs in the village while the women prepare the meal. This is the ceremony called towɛ nyɛ, which takes place at the edge of the mortuary shed about four o'clock in the afternoon. Each woman of the lineage brings a large bowl of rice and a small bowl containing either a piece of meat cooked in sauce or some fish. The oldest man of the lineage has large banana leaves spread out on the ground at the edge of the shed; he takes a little of each dish and puts it down on the leaves, while at the same time addressing the ancestors in ordinary language in the tone of an intimate conversation: "Dead of the family, come, come to eat today."

That lasts perhaps a quarter of an hour, while those present are seated, immobile and meditative. The ancestors are supposed to eat the spiritual part of the food -- kaaka fu nyɛ.

Then the elders line up at the edge of the shed five or six small children of about ten years, each one of whom holds a basin upside down. A man keeps them in line /174/ with the aid of a long stick. Then, at a signal, he lifts the stick and the children dash headlong with laughs and shouts toward the ancestors' portion, each one carrying away all he could cover [613] with his basin. The ceremony terminates with a joyful meal eaten together by the whole lineage, symbol of the communion between the dead and the living.

764 /174 cont./
Cemeteries. There are two cemeteries in Boni country: one on the lands of the Dikan lineage for the people living on the French bank, the other downstream from Kotika for the inhabitants of that village. They are ordinary places which nothing indicates from the bank, for they are covered like the rest of the country by secondary forest. The dead are buried there in graves aligned parallel to the river, about seven meters apart. The dead are placed with heads turned toward the river. No separation by lineage exists within the cemetery.

The graves are not marked by any decoration, and at the end of about ten years, the mound having settled down, no trace of the burial remains.

[767] The graves are never cleaned. Only the ɔlɔmɛ̃ heads, who have received special instruction, know the graves of the principal chiefs and the boundaries of the cemetery.

769 [784] [785] The Boni never go to the cemetery alone and do not make offerings on the graves of their near relatives. Someone who would frequent the cemetery alone would be suspected of being a wisimɛ̃ seeking to capture the yɔrka of a dead person.

764 487 Even if they are right near the villages, cemeteries are never connected directly to them by paths, and the dead are transported by boat. By proceeding thus they hope to isolate the villages from evil influences.

766 If someone dies by drowning, he is buried away from the cemetery. According to Mr. W. F. van Lier, among the Djuka [761] all drowned persons are supposed to have been victims of a [784] kunu; the Boni do not have this conception and declare that they [184] have lost the meaning of this custom; one notices, however, that they observe mourning for the drowned according to the usual rites.

/174 cont./

764 Children are buried with the normal ceremonies only from about the age of six on. The rule is the following: A child is buried in the cemetery and broko dɛ is done for him if the next child of the same mother is beginning to walk.

766 [828] [795] Young children are buried without a coffin at a special site on the edge of each village; a board is simply placed on the body before filling the grave. They have the idea that very young children have no vital force, and that their yɔrka cannot do any harm. /Fig. 25 appears here./ /175/

764 Mourning

After the burial the wives of the dead man (or the husband if it is a woman), the nearest relatives on the maternal side, as well as the children, sojourn eight days more in the mortuary shed, until the broko dɛ.

765 [831] [795] [171] From then on the obligations of mourning are limited, for the near relatives of the dead person, to abstaining for a year from dancing, wearing jewelry or too fine clothes; it goes completely otherwise for the spouse of the dead person; the Refugee Blacks indeed take for granted, like the Creoles of Surinam, the persistence of the sexual jealousy of the dead person, whose yɔrka is thought to remain in contact with the living for a year.

State of the spouse in mourning. The principle is that the surviving spouse, until the lifting of mourning, is subject to the will of the dead person. In order to materialize that in an obvious way, he cannot, during this whole period, wear his usual clothes but must dress exclusively in pieces of cloth appropriated for him from among the ones the dead person possessed, or given by the nearest maternal relatives of the dead person.

6:Hurault--265a K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
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Fig. 25. The coffin is placed on board a canoe.

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428 In the custom of the Refugee Blacks, the inheritance
[613] must be dispersed among the members of the dead person's matrilineage in the strict sense (bee) and his children.

/189/ The custom of numerous African societies has it that the men inherit from men and the women from women. This notion is totally contrary to the legal thought of the Refugee Blacks. A house, an object, a boat, may pass from a man to a woman or conversely. It is the same with the lower gods with which the dead person might have been possessed.

428 If the dead person has not indicated before his death, in
789 front of witnesses, the distribution of his property, the same
764 divinatory procedure is used as for the determination of the causes of death: the coffin being carried on the heads of two men, in front of it are lined up the members of the dead person's matrilineage in the restricted sense and his children. The president of the Linti kuutu asks: "To whom dost thou leave thy house?" The coffin moves toward one of those present, then: "To whom dost thou leave thy boat?" "To whom dost thou leave thy gun?" "To whom dost thou leave thy clearings being harvested?"

428 The partial heirs thus designated may enter immediately into possession of their legacies.

428 Reserved are what the Boni call the "equipment" of the
765 dead person, that is, his personal belongings, linen, money, which will be divided up after the lifting of mourning.

The customary rule is the following:

[602] For the duration of the mourning, these objects shut up in a trunk are put under the care of the eldest child if a woman was concerned, of the eldest classificatory nephew if a man was

428 concerned. After the lifting of mourning, the distribution is
602 made by the dead person's mother, if she is still alive, if not by the eldest of the classificatory uncles or aunts, and if they all are dead, by the eldest of the surviving classificatory brothers or sisters of the dead person.

/242 cont./

754 Of course he was recognized as a wisimã by the first
764 adjuration made to his body carried in the papay on the heads
787 of two men: "If thou art a wisi man, do not come toward us."
The dead man drew back. /2../

[784] /243/ Continuation of the interrogation showed that he had not yet killed anybody, but that he had been killed by Odún when he was preparing to kill someone of his lineage.

754 The persecutors of Agyémési, contrary to their hope, did not recover after his death from the maladies which they were attributing to his sorcery; that did not shake their conviction in
755 the least. They left for Paramaribo to have themselves treated
648 by a Creole magician (for the Surinam Creoles, who practice white magic and black magic indiscriminately, are by this fact reputed to be more expert than the Refugee Blacks in combating the effects of wisi).

754 In recounting this story to us, the grand man told us that it is always necessary to be cautious with accusations of wisi,
[762] because one can never be sure. A man unjustly accused can
[784] commit suicide and pursue his accusers with his kunu (most of the Boni state that they would do so in such a case). In former
173 times, the barbarous punishments in use in Africa were applied
683 to revealed wisimã: they were burned alive. But people tell
784 that one of them, some months afterward, undertook against his accusers' lineage a kunu which still lasts today. He had been
[178] wrongly condemned! It is through fear of the kunu more than through care for humanity, that these punishments have been abolished.

754 It certainly seems that the constant fear of the wisimã in
[152] which the Boni live is only a collective hallucination, and that rare indeed are those who dare to indulge in practices which might draw upon them such terrible social and religious sanctions. As for these practices themselves, they appear to be without any real content, and the misfortunes attributed to them are

6:Hurault--412a K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
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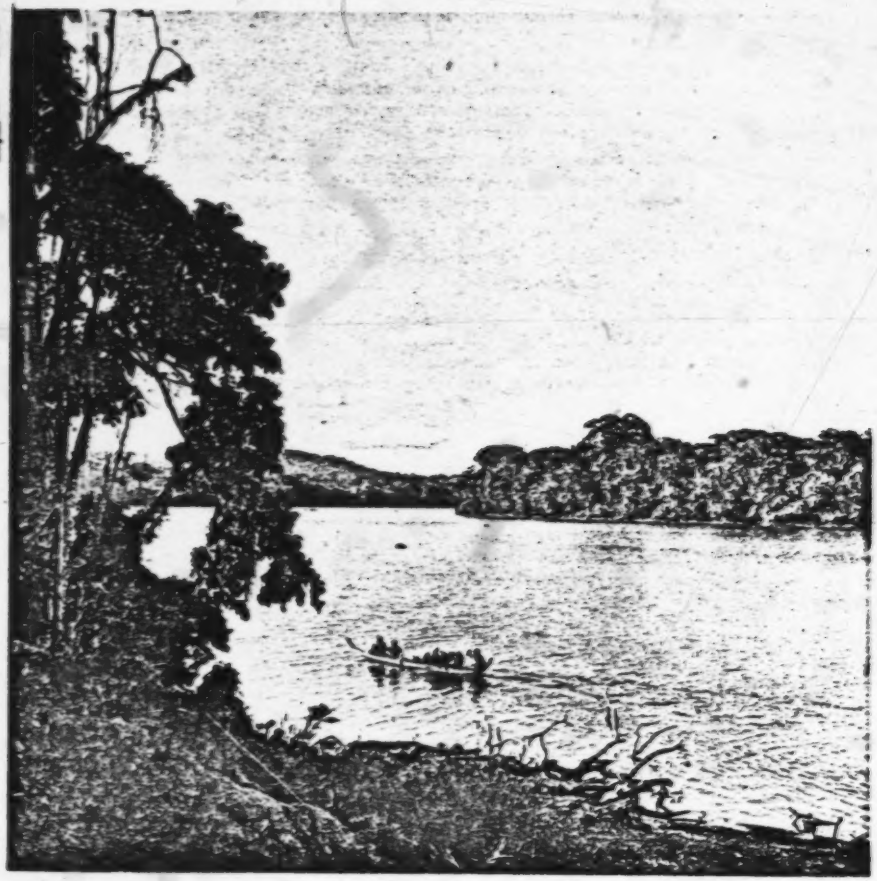

Fig. 29. The last trip of a dead person on the river.

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*539 During the night he got up and went and untied the ox which escaped into the bush.

The next day he said to the bachia: "Bachia, please go and get my ox." The bachia looked for it in vain. He said: "Anansi, the ox has escaped into the bush." We shall give you another." -- "That won't do," said Anansi; "I was passing by on the river and you called me without any reason. Give me the dead child."

They said: "Uncle Anansi, we cannot give him to you, he is already in the coffin." "Let's make an end of it," said Anansi, "you are provoking me." The bachia went to tell the mother (of the dead child) that a misfortune had arrived(1).

● [764] [613] [593]

1. It is to be noted that it is not from the lineage head that one asks for authorization to dispose of the body, but from the mother alone.

She agreed to it. They broke the coffin and gave the body to Anansi. He put it in the bow of the boat and paddled until he came to a big bend in the river. Once out of sight of the village people, he /281/ made a little paddle. He went to the bow seat of the boat, he fastened the dead child to it with glue. He put the body in a sitting position, as if it were alive, he fastened the paddle in its hand.

He paddled until he heard something like the noise of a boat. He said to himself: "Listen, stand up, perhaps a boat is coming." He placed the boat in the strongest part of the current, he paddled hard, standing in the stern. He heard better, he said: "It is a ship." He shouted: "Ah, ah! Today I meet thee, thou whom I sought for so long." He saw clearly that it was a ship. Comrades, he paddled in the current; the

6:Hurault--581 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
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